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FREE MAGAZINE

Hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that.
~ Martin Luther King Jr.

An eye for an eye will only make the whole world blind.
~ Mahatma Gandhi

There is no way to peace Peace is the way

War is over... If you want it.
~ John Lennon

Dad, how do soldiers killing each other solve the world's problems?
~ Bill Watterson

Fighting for peace is like screwing for virginity.
~ George Carlin

I'm fed up with old men dreaming up wars for young men to die in.
~ George S. McGovern

Mankind must put an end to war ~ or war will put an end to mankind
~ John F. Kennedy

Peace, commerce, and honest friendship with all nations... entangling alliances with none.
~ Thomas Jefferson

True peace is not merely the absence of war, it is the presence of justice.
~ Jane Addams

We will not learn to live together in peace by killing each other's children.
~ Jimmy Carter

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Canadians to Trudeau: Let's talk C-51!

As the dust settles after the recent federal election, the priorities of Canada's new Liberal majority government are becoming clear. Early signs show the government intends to pursue an ambitious agenda: there are nearly 300 items on the to-do lists Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has assigned to members of his Cabinet.

Near the top of Trudeau's list is, of course, tackling the mess left by the previous government when it comes to Bill C-51, the reckless spying bill that has prompted nationwide street protests and a 300,000-strong repeal campaign.

In his mandate letters to incoming Public Safety and Justice Ministers Ralph Goodale and Jody Wilson-Raybould, Trudeau made it clear C-51 is a top priority, instructing them to: "Work to repeal… the problematic elements of Bill C-51 and introduce new legislation that strengthens accountability with respect to national security and better balances collective security with rights and freedoms."

Now let's be clear about one thing: this is progress and it would never have happened without so many everyday Canadians standing up and calling for change. It's always inspiring to see what's possible when Canadians work together.

However, given the complexity of Bill C-51 and the multitude of security and privacy issues it raises, Canadians should necessarily be consulted before any reform package is introduced.

To date, the proposed reforms the Liberals have floated in the media leave key issues unaddressed. And the new government, while indicating it wants to keep parts of the controversial bill, has yet to identify which parts these are, let alone make a case for keeping them.

That's why a diverse range of organizations and experts recently teamed up to send Prime Minister Trudeau a joint letter urging him to launch a full public consultation as the best way to ensure that the many problems with C-51 are effectively addressed. This letter recommends a straightforward three-step approach to consultation.

Firstly, the government should issue a Position Statement setting out the government's rationale for C-51, including an assessment of the impact on civil liberties and an explanation for why these are justified.

Secondly, the government should hold a national online consultation process to ensure all Canadians can have their voices heard and acted on before new legislation is tabled.

Thirdly, the government should hold a public consultation with civil society groups, academics, businesses and other stakeholders on the basis of the government's position statement and plans to move forward.

At the time of writing, we've yet to hear back, but there are grounds for encouragement. At his swearing-in, Prime Minister Trudeau emphasized he sees transparency, openness and accountability as being at the heart of his new government. And it's clear that C-51 is a real chance for the government to show it practises what it preaches.

It's also obvious where Canadians stand – they want a seat at the table! After months of being ignored by the previous government, there's a lot of pent-up energy out there. In just over a week, for example, over 10,000 Canadians used an OpenMedia tool to email Justin Trudeau to ask him to sit down and talk.

Readers can add their voice to this call at KillC51.ca – and with the government seemingly open to a fresh approach, it's never been more important to ensure your voice is heard.

David Christopher is the communications manager for OpenMedia (openmedia.ca), a community-based organization that safeguards the possibilities of the open Internet.

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With a Purpose for Peace the Light will Return

"The eloquence of our own affection for one another keeps the world healthy. Praise and the depth of grief expressed for one another keeps the world in love. Love is health." – Martin Prechtel

Common Ground's December cover is our response to "The Troubles", inflated by multinational media to justify yet another invasion. We don't dispel the darkness with depression, but by lighting a candle. There are powerful people who use deceit and violence – or any means – to reach their selfish goals. War is their hideous lying racket. Unfortunately they still own much of the mass media. So tune in to your independent attention, turn off the TV, and drop out of mass corporate media.

In contrast, our cover expresses the joy of life and Spirit. The quotes challenge us to act for peace not war. Because all that is necessary for evil to succeed is for people to sit at home, watch TV, get confused, and do nothing. Indifference is the opposite of love. Love is life. That is the difference.

Joseph Roberts, publisher, Common Ground

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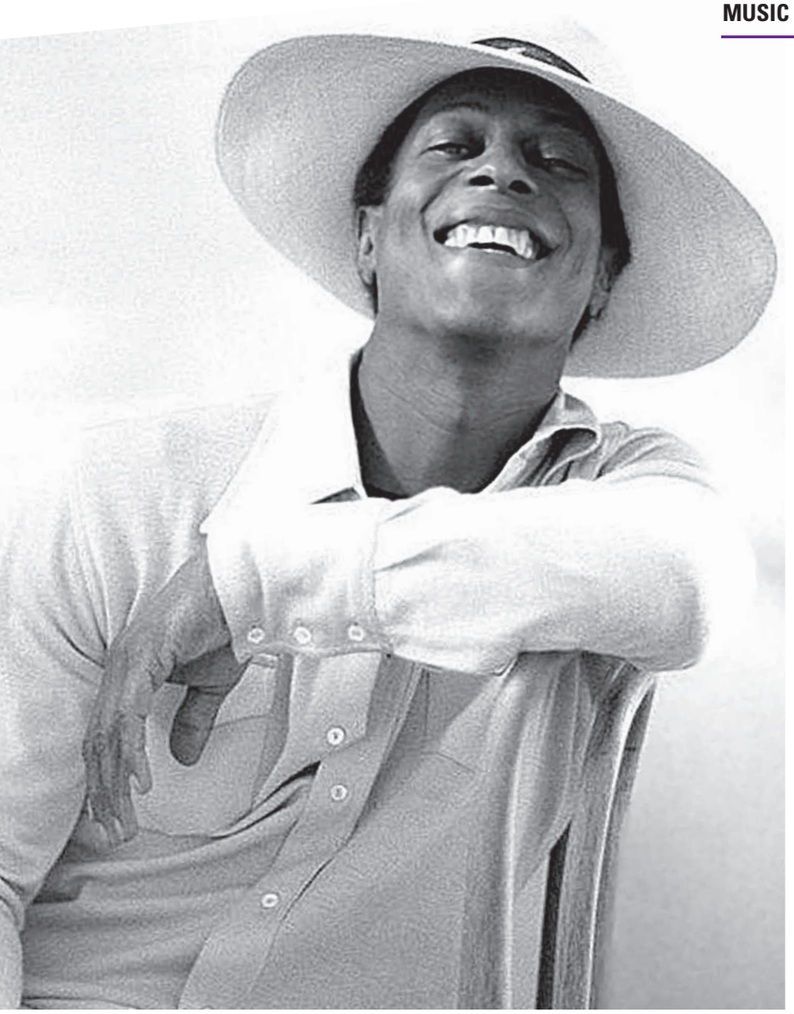
Leon Bibb

from Kentucky to Kitsilano



Leon Bibb in 1976

The long-standing love affair between Leon Bibb and Vancouver ended when the legendary performer passed away in late October in a Kitsilano care home at the age of 93.

He first arrived in his adopted city in 1968 as the opening act for the then wildly popular comedian Bill Cosby. From the window of a luxury Bayshore hotel room, Bibb became enchanted with Vancouver's working harbour and snow-capped mountains, vowing, "I have to live here."

> Leon once told me he was most proud of his anti-racism and anti-bullying work.

It was an unlikely move for a prominent figure in the continent-wide folk music revival. Bibb was also a Broadway and TV star – having appeared in Sidney Poitier movies and recorded albums for major labels – and a stirring performer at landmark demonstrations, including the March on Washington in 1963 and the protests in Selma, Alabama, two years later.

Harry Belafonte, a friend from Harlem back in the '50s, has noted, "Of all of us, he was probably the most talented. We were all envious of his beautiful baritone voice. He was really committed to the cause of civil rights and was hugely inspiring."

Bibb abandoned New York for what was still a rough, blue-collar city. His first Vancouver performance featured blues and work songs, anti-war ballads and Malcolm X poems. Tickets were just 50 cents, but the UBC ballroom was half empty. He became a suspect in a robbery – solely because there were so few blacks locally – then fought for and received an apology.

Years later in 2011, back at UBC to accept an honorary doctorate, he described his birthplace, Louisville, Kentucky. "Segregated and racist, ringed by the white world and 'coloured' signs on toilets and fountains. I never had a conversation with a white person until I went to New York at 19."

Belafonte, Bibb and Baez in Montgomery, Alabama

photo by Matt Herron

At four years of age, he sang solos in church and was featured in the glee club at Louisville Municipal College for Negroes. He left home to study and perform music and in 1946, while working at a New York automat, Leon landed a role in the original *Annie Get Your Gun*, singing *Moonshine Lullaby* with Ethel Merman 1,247 times!

But too few acting roles for black actors motivated Bibb to sing folk in the '50s. He performed in the coffeehouse craze, at the first Newport Festival in '59 and signed to Vanguard for several albums, including "Leon Bibb Sings Folk Songs." His good looks, charm and stirring versatility – soulful ballads, chain-gang chants, spirituals and gospel songs as well as Broadway show tunes – made him a frequent TV guest. He made eight appearances on *Ed Sullivan* and had regular spots on the *Tonight Show, Merv Griffin* and *Hootenanny,* broadening his audience. In 1967, he received a Tony nomination for the Black song-and-poetry revue *A Hand Is on the Gate*. The next year he attracted attention and notoriety as the love interest in an interracial staging of *Carnival*.

Dropped from TV for supporting blacklisted artists Pete Seeger and Paul Robeson, in 1968 he created and hosted the talk show *Someone New*, where he introduced unknowns such as teenaged cellist Yo-Yo Ma and budding songwriter Barry Manilow. He also acquired performing rights to *Jacques Brel Is Alive and Well and Living in Paris.* An unprecedented seven-month run at Vancouver's Arts Club established live theatre on the west coast.

Bibb also performed with the VSO and became a Canadian icon. His history of blues, ranging from a Harlem nightclub to a New Orleans whorehouse, was adapted as *The Candyman* and sequel on the CBC, nationally. And his gospel cantata about the underground railway, *One More Stop on the Freedom Train,* wowed Ontario and Vancouver at Expo 86. Bibb said, "The city offered a lifestyle that could never have happened in New York or L.A. and I liked it." Grateful citizens bestowed honours on the highly visible, beloved figure, such as the Order of British Columbia and BC's Entertainment Hall of Fame.

With son Eric – a Grammy-nominated acoustic blues singer-songwriter – he recorded *A Family Affair* (2002) and *Praising Peace: A Tribute to Paul Robeson* (2006).

Leon once told me he was most proud of his anti-racism and anti-bullying work, including a 1990's cross-country tour of theatre and song entitled "A Step Ahead." Deeply affected as an African American in Western Canada, at a time when knowledge about black history was so limited, he created and financed the program at hundreds of schools.

In what was to be his final public performance – February 2014, in Victoria's Government House – he was ushered in by a piper and introduced by the Lieutenant Governor to sing in celebration of Black History Month.

Leon Bibb is survived by his partner Christine Anton, his two daughters Dorie and Amy, son Eric, nine grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

Bruce Mason is a Vancouver and Gabriola Island-based five-string banjo player, gardener, freelance writer and author of Our Clinic. brucemason@shaw.ca

EVENT: A Celebration of Leon Bibb's life will be staged at the Arts Club's Granville Island Stage at 2pm January 10, 2016. Doors open at 1:30pm.

Are three pills better than two?

The obsessive drive for lower blood pressure targets is mostly a scam

What if being made to worry causes you to take more drugs, make more doctor visits and become more obsessive about your health, but doesn't help you live a longer or better life? Would that be good medicine? I wouldn't think so.

One of the many ways that people worry is in response to what is deemed the "silent killer" – their blood pressure. I wonder how often my readers have been told they've got "high" blood pressure and were instructed to lower it by changing their diet or taking drugs? And whether all the checking, altering and rechecking those numbers has become a new and neurotic hobby?

Checking our blood pressures and taking drugs to alter them are very costly to our health care system, but are they worth it? If I told you the obsessive drive for lower blood pressure targets is mostly a scam, most of you wouldn't believe me. So I have to show you.

On November 9, 2015, the *New England Journal of Medicine* published SPRINT – the Systolic Blood Pressure Intervention Trial – which compared "intensive" blood pressure lowering against "standard" blood pressure targets. It screened and enrolled over 9,000 older people with moderately high blood pressure, who were also at high risk of heart disease. Half of them were randomly assigned to try to achieve a systolic blood pressure (the top number) target of below 120 mm of mercury. People in this "intensive" arm of the study took, on average, three different blood pressure lowering pills to reach that target. They were compared to a "standard" therapy group where patients aimed for a systolic pressure of less than 140 mm and took an average of two blood pressure pills.

After three years into the trial, it was stopped because the people in the "intensive" group were doing better. Undoubtedly, the new study fit within the dominant blood pressure narrative that lives by the mantra, "lower is better." But is it?

I'm not questioning the value of lower blood pressure or taking drugs to achieve it. If your pressures are up around 180 or 200, doing what you can – exercising, modifying your diet and yes, maybe taking drugs – can be a sensible thing to do. But for people whose pressures are "moderately high," say around 150 over 95, is it worth driving those pressures even lower?

That's what SPRINT set out to discover. What shocked me most after I read the study and accompanying news reports is that the opposite is likely true: the people in the "intensive" three-pill arm of the study fared *worse*.

Here's what the SPRINT trial's numbers looked like: those in the "intensive" arm had 0.8% fewer cases of heart failure, 0.6% fewer cases of cardiovascular death and an overall 1.2% reduced risk of death compared to those on two pills. Sounds like a slam-dunk, right? Just wait; there were serious adverse effects measured in the trial. Those in the intensive arm also had a 1% increase in hypotension (extremely low blood pressure), a 0.6% increase in syncope (fainting due to low blood pressure), a 0.8% increase in electrolyte abnormality (which affects muscle and brain function) and a 1.8% increase in "acute kidney injury or kidney failure."

So the likely outcome of taking the three-pill regimen is kidney damage even if you might be slightly less likely to die from any cause. Having a slightly increased risk of extremely low blood pressure, dizziness and falls has to be weighed against the slightly increased benefit of not having being admitted to hospital for heart failure or dying.

The SPRINT trialists came to a pretty definitive conclusion: "SPRINT now provides evidence of benefits for an even lower systolic blood-pressure target than that currently recommended in most patients with hypertension." But my question is and remains: "Do we trust a single new study?"

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Of course not. The most reliable research is not single studies, but systematic reviews, which are "high-level" overviews of research that tries to amass, synthesize and appraise the best research on a question. It collates the evidence into a single picture and is more reliable because it makes it clear exactly what is being measured and what is being missed.

The "How low should we go?" question has been well covered by the folks at the UBC-based Cochrane Hypertension Review group. In a systematic review published in 2009, they found that aiming for blood pressure targets lower than 140/90 were not beneficial. Those researchers examined data from seven trials in over 22,000 people and concluded: "Using more drugs in the lower target groups did achieve modestly lower blood pressures. However, this strategy did not prolong survival or reduce stroke, heart attack, heart failure or kidney failure."

What shocked me most after I read the study and accompanying news reports is that the opposite is likely true: the people in the "intensive" three-pill arm of the study fared worse.

I called up Dr. Jim Wright – a co-author of that review and head of the Cochrane Hypertension Review group – and asked him if the SPRINT trial should make people change their minds about the desirability of lower blood pressure targets. "Definitely not," he said.

Right now, Wright is incorporating this new data into the Cochrane Collaboration's software – known as RevMan – to determine if the picture changes and to see if the new trial reverses what has been found in the best available evidence overall. In Wright's mind, the main things worth examining in a clinical trial are those with life-threatening impact. "Total mortality and total serious adverse events are the only things that count," he told me, adding that the SPRINT trial "shows a decrease in total mortality and an increase in total non-fatal serious adverse events with lower targets."

One of the things I noticed in the study is that it showed a reduction in non-cardiovascular mortality, which is to say, death that is not related to your heart. Yet how does that make sense? A drug trial that can also prevent deaths by drowning or car accidents? Wright was also confused: "I don't know how this could happen. It looks suspicious that the more intensive treatment also reduces non-cardiovascular mortality too. How does that make sense?"

Wright says that when he adds the SPRINT trial to nine other trials studying the same question, the 10 trials together show no difference in mortality. In other words, the findings of this trial are an outlier and there is no overall evidence that the lower, intensive blood pressure target makes people live longer.

I foresee the SPRINT trial will be spun as a success story and used to market the idea of lower pressures. The study published details of the financial conflicts of the researchers, some of whom have multiple ties to multiple drug companies. Takeda and Arbor pharmaceuticals contributed some of the study drugs, including the newest angiotensin receptor blocker, azilsartan (Edarbi) as well as its combination with chlorthalidone (Edarbyclor). SPRINT's lead researcher, Jackson Wright, had a 2013 consulting relationship with Takeda and he's also worked extensively with hypertension guideline committees in the US, shaping how doctors think about treating high blood pressure.

I anticipate reprints of this study will be used to market drugs like Edarbi and Edarbyclor to our physicians and otherwise be used to reinforce the "lower is better" mantra. All this despite the fact the mantra appears to lead to a lot of avoidable harm.

Now you're wondering, "Do I really need to get down to 120 over 80?" Certainly, for older people, the pay-off is in quality of life. Do you really want to spend the rest of your life dizzy, falling and suffering from the effects of kidney failure based on the results of the newest trial being hyped? Maybe you do. But if not, maybe you should repeat back to your doctor the words of retired pharmacologist Dr. Bob Rangno, who once told me, "It's better to have high blood pressure than no blood pressure at all."

Amen to that.

Wright says that, in the past, when he has presented the results of this Cochrane review to doctors, "they're delighted" and that "chasing numbers in patients is frustrating for them and the patient."

Alan Cassels is a drug policy researcher in Victoria with an interest in how drug studies and systematic reviews are presented in the media. His newest book, **The Cochrane Collaboration: Medicine's Best Kept Secret**, is likely to fit in anyone's stocking.

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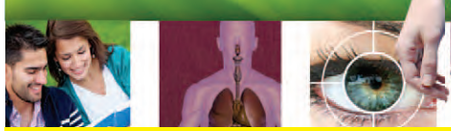

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The sunlight vitamin

Around the year 1900 in the northeastern US, 80 to 90 percent of the children had the symptoms of rickets – bowed legs and seizures. The situation was eventually linked with a lack of vitamin D and sunlight. Glance out the window now. Is it grey? Well, our grey winter skies last until April and we *need* sunlight.

We Canadians first remedied this situation with cod liver oil, then by fortifying cow's milk (and now non-dairy milks) with vitamin D and allowing the addition of vitamin D to margarine, cereals, a few other foods and vitamin D supplements.

Yet in a recent Canadian study, pediatricians reported 52 confirmed cases of rickets per year among youngsters with an average age of 1.4 years. While most had been breast-fed, they had not received the recommended vitamin D supplementation (400 IU/day). (Though breast is best, infant formula *does* contain vitamin D.) Many (89%) had intermediate or darker skin.

In a recent Canadian study, pediatricians reported 52 confirmed cases of rickets per year among youngsters with an average age of 1.4 years.

On clear days during warm weather, through exposing our face and forearms to the sun – without sunscreen – we may make sufficient vitamin D with approximately 15 minutes of exposure if we are light-skinned and 30 minutes or more if we are dark-skinned. The melanin pigment protects against sunburn for people close to the equator, but means longer sun exposure is needed for vitamin D production.

For those above 33° N latitude (at the Louisiana-Arkansas border or in Phoenix), there is little or no vitamin D production over winter months, even on sunny days. And as we go north, there are even longer "Vitamin D winters." Don't expect to make much vitamin D from about October to April. And recent studies show that in smoggy southern cities such as Los Angeles or San Diego, vitamin D production is also limited, despite sunshine above the smog.

Older people take longer to produce vitamin D with the same exposure to the ultraviolet radiation that stimulates our manufacture of this substance. One study showed adults aged 62 to 80 had one-third the vitamin D production of those aged 20 to 30. A few years ago, I spent three October weeks in Italy and two December weeks in Hawaii and I was still low in vitamin D in February. Now, I top up my intake with supplements.

To check one's status, serum vitamin D can be tested through one's physician (one option is to pay for the test) or a test kit (search online). Though vitamin D is present in a few fortified beverages and foods, it's a challenge to reach optimal intakes this way. The official adult recommendation is 15 mcg (600 IU) until age 70 and 20 mcg (800 IU) after age 70. Yet these early recommendations were based solely on research related to bone health. We now realize vitamin D has many more functions (supporting our immune system, reducing risk of cancer, diabetes, depression). It seems that double or triple these amounts are safe for adults and may be advisable.

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The acid alkaline balance

by Lisa Kilgour

photo © Rafael Ben-ari

Our body is pretty miraculous. It's a self-regulating, self-healing organism that's capable of finding balance in a chaotic world. Let's just think about the number of things we do every day that are a strain on our body. We eat food that may or may not be what our body is looking for, we move into different temperature environments regularly (artificially heated and cooled environments are relatively new for our bodies) and we either breathe deeply or… well, not very deeply.

This is a lot to handle and our body keeps moving along without our awareness of what it's doing to keep us balanced. That is miraculous.

Let's just look at one aspect our body is trying to keep in balance, our body's pH. The pH (potential of hydrogen) is a scale from 1-14 and shows the level of acid or alkaline a substance is. Closer to 1 = acidic; closer to 14 = alkaline (or base) and 7 is neutral.

We have many different levels of pH in our body. Our stomach is very acidic (ideally a pH of 2), but just a bit further down our digestive system is our small intestine and our body must change the digesting food from a pH of 2 to a much more alkaline 8 for proper absorption.

Our blood is the most important pH our body is trying manage because our body needs our blood at a *very* narrow pH (7.35 – 7.45) to keep us alive.

> You may have read that you want to be very alkaline (up to 8.0), but I must disagree with this. Our body wants balance and too much of a good thing is not a good thing.

Our urine pH can change quite dramatically day to day and it can act as an indicator of what our body is doing to balance our blood pH. If it's in the acidic range (6.2 or lower), our body is trying to pull acids out of our system. If it's neutral or just slightly alkaline (7.0-7.4), our body is pretty happy and isn't working too hard. Being too alkaline (above 7.4) is a problem and shows our body is working hard at pulling down our body's pH.

You may have read that you want to be very alkaline (up to 8.0), but I must disagree with this. Our body wants balance and too much of a good thing is not a good thing. I love using the acid/alkaline balance as a way to find balance in my body. It's testable; it's a very healthy way of eating and I can see a change in my urine pH within a few days. I love fast results.

Alkaline foods: our diet tends to be more acidic than alkaline producing so most of us need to concentrate on adding alkaline foods. Enjoy whole, unprocessed grains, seeds, nuts, fruits and veggies. High mineral content = alkaline.

Stress reduction: breathing deeply is alkaline-forming and shallow, stress-filled breaths are an acidic input. Ironically, stressing about eating more alkaline foods is an acidic input. Deep breathing, a walk in nature, meditation and gentle yoga are wonderful alkaline-forming activities.

Excerpted from the original article at genuinehealth.com **Lisa Kilgour** has 10 years of experience in health and nutrition and is Board Certified in Practical Holistic Nutrition through CAHN-PRO. In the fall of 2010, she was voted "BC's Favourite Nutritionist." She loves to help people find foods that make them feel and operate at their best. www.eatmorerealfood.com

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Colouring books for grown-ups

Therapy and creativity for the stressed-out and weary

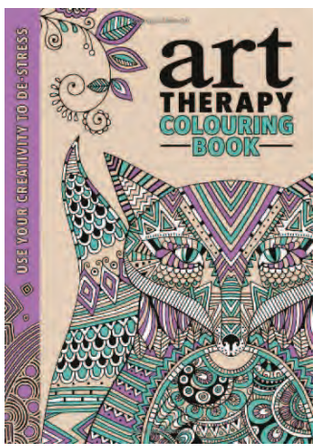
For millions of folks, 2015 was the "Year of the Adult Colouring Book." After occupying at least five spots on Amazon's Top-10 bestsellers for all 12 months, ACBs (a *Common Ground* acronym) are the current "most-wished-for gifts" in Canada and elsewhere.

Stressed-out, screen-weary grown-ups of every stripe are seeking digital detox from ubiquitous desktops, laptops, tablets, smart-phones, E-readers and dumb-downed TV. They're unplugging Wi-Fi and Ring Tones to de-stress and self-express in good-old-fashioned, interactive, tactile analog. Opting for a time-out – in a world vibrating with anxiety – they're taking a recess from the relentless news of recession, terrorism, climate change, the boss, the mortgage; pick your poison.

A fad among fashionable French ladies has morphed into a "niche," the latest "literary" craze and the biggest publishing phenomenon in decades. Entire sections and display areas have cropped up in virtually every book and big-box store. Heather Reisman – CEO of Canada's Indigo Books – recently credited them with "significantly lifting sales throughout the chain."

Forget about freebie restaurant colouring sheets. We're talking hyper-detailed doodling here: tropical birds and Tiffany designs, historic ships and tattoos, aircraft and luxury cars, human anatomy, art masterpieces and mandalas – endless mandalas. It's worth pointing out that Carl Jung prescribed colouring to his psychiatry patients; clients received black and white mandala drawings in therapy. And also forget about those bygone primary crayons. They don't cut it anymore. Think Prismacolor and gel pens for a contemporary palette. Think spectacular spectrums and new rainbows to choose from to make that tricky owl in the corner really pop!

Much of the paper is heavy duty so colours can't bleed through. And authors often include little treasure hunts of extra images in their exceptionally detailed illustrations, as well as blank spaces, encouraging personalized elements. There are pocket-sized editions for the commuter, detachable pages for the keepers among us and spiral-bound versions and flexible spines. Publishers and marketers are burning the midnight oil, keen to keep up with the almost insatiable demand, which is not going away anytime soon.



As well – and as usual – there are also myriad "experts," scratching their heads on the sidelines of the dizzying array of paper playgrounds. Colouring is touted, and sold, as a boon to the housebound, to help one achieve mindfulness, banish anxiety, even deal with trauma. The plethora of themes and patterns include the *Art Therapy Colouring Book*, *Stress-Relieving Cats* and *Can't Sleep Colouring.* The American Art Therapy Association shrugs, admitting it's beneficial, self-care. A tad therapeutic, but not art, say critics who don't like it, claiming it's analogous to listening to music, not making it, or art inside pre-drawn lines.

Among the skeptics is Susan Jacoby, author of *The Age of American Unreason*. She quotes the *Bible*: "When I was a child, I thought as a child, but as an adult, I put away childish things." She describes the phenomenon as bad colouring books, regressive, escapist fantasy, a general decline in effort and broad Great Recession cultural shift, presumably including jobless, indebted 20-somethings moving back into childhood homes, experiencing psychological retreat instead of maturity.

Guilty as charged. But consider new forensics and the technology to measure brainwaves and heart rhythms. Turns out colouring relaxes the amygdala – the fear centre of the brain – enabling our mind and bodies to get required rest. It opens up the frontal lobe, the home of organizing and problem solving, focuses the mind and helps us forget to worry, a critical skill in our interesting times. It unleashes free expression and facilitates relaxation in the moment. Much like crossword puzzling, it can help delay or prevent dementia.

Dr. Stan Rodski, a consulting neuropsychologist and author of *Anti-Stress: Colouring Book for Adults* (Volumes 1-6), isolates three key elements – repetition, pattern and detail – as prompts for positive neurological response.

It's limitless creativity with satisfaction gained from watching colour slowly spread and thought and effort becoming tangible and beautiful. Wander and wonder through the paper labyrinths, with no traps and nothing to solve. So, unlike some fads, this one is actually really good for you.

I think it's part of our unacknowledged desire to do "nothing" sometimes, to let the liminal brain take over, without technological murmurs as ever-present cognitive buffers, to simply zone out. Frankly, I want to garden in colour, in winter.

"Peter Pan market?" Sure. Who doesn't want to be "a kid again" and ditch technology, momentarily, in favour of our inner child? And DIY is all the rage. *Common Ground* readers know that the first step in mindfulness – or is it mind-fullnes – is to gather one's attention and halt the mind's repetitive ruminating and anticipating, shifting from linguistic to the somatosensory cortex, becoming grounded in body sensations and breathing.

There's a good reason why Scottish illustrator Johanna Basford's first two books – *Secret Garden* and *Enchanted Forest* – became instant best-sellers, now available in 14 languages. And why her latest, *Lost Ocean,* sold tens of thousands in its first week out in late October. She wanted to relax and share a little fun. Don't we all? Especially with blockbuster franchises like *Game of Thrones*, *Harry Potter* and *Doctor Who*, now out with their own ACBs.

Want to colour? Knock yourself out; fill your boots. It's cathartic, quintessential and the gift that truly keeps on giving. And there are lots of free samples to download and print; just Google free adult colouring books.

Repeating patterns in life

Reincarnation occurs because we decide that we haven't learned enough lessons.
– Sylvia Browne

We may have had many lifetimes, but this one is short and we deserve to be happy.

"That's the story of my life!" This comment is made when a negative event seems to parallel many others in one's past.

In my clients, I often see patterns or themes that have run through their lives. Sometimes they are consciously aware of them; other times, I need to draw it to their attention. It might be a woman who was not allowed a voice as a child who ends up with a domineering partner and a micro-managing boss. Now her teenaged children are disrespecting her.

We can find reason enough in the person's lifetime to explain these repetitions. It could be low self-esteem, feeling un-deserving or having an increased tolerance for unhealthy relationships. Sometimes they just struggle along, powerless to do anything about their situation.

In other cases, the person feels a real sense of crisis because she absolutely does not want to go on living in an unhappy way. In cases like this, I imagine the person has had many lifetimes living out the same patterns in various guises: perhaps as a serf in the Middle Ages, a slave or a member of a low class or caste.

Having experienced the struggle and sorrow over many lifetimes, the individual decides this is the lifetime she will change that pattern. In order to feel that strong desire to stop reliving the past, the person would have to first repeat the old pattern in this lifetime to be reminded of it. Then, somewhere in midlife or later, there is a crisis of consciousness and a voice inside rises up and says, "No more! I can't stand living like this." There then follows a crisis in the individual's life. The "What do I do now?" question is like a glowing neon billboard. The question is whether to leave the situation or try to change it.

Both choices require courage. In past lifetimes, there likely really was no choice. The person truly was powerless. In this lifetime, the person has the opportunity to draw on his or her own inner power, find their voice and take action to better their situation. This is the hardest part. In past lifetimes, to speak up may have meant being beaten or killed. In present day, I sometimes see my clients are afraid of their own voice. They feel like something horrible will happen if they begin to speak their truth.

My first task as a therapist is to help the person express what they are feeling inside. Then, having little trust in themselves, they wonder if it is okay to feel that way. Those inner feelings may be the voice of the soul, which is urging and reminding us it is time to take action and change the patterns.

The next step is to help them begin the process of speaking their truth. Sometimes, it means writing a letter or beginning a process of stating what is no longer acceptable. One of my clients wrote a letter to her husband about his criticisms and angry reactions. She said that while she loved him, she no longer wished to be treated that way and would have to leave if it continued. Nearly six months later, he has not had a single outburst or criticized her about anything.

We may have had many lifetimes, but this one is short and we deserve to be happy.

Gwen Randall-Young is an author and psychotherapist in private practice. For articles and information about her books, "Deep Powerful Change" hypnosis CDs and "Creating Effective Relationships" series, visit www.gwen.ca Follow on Facebook.

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December 2015

THE WINTER solstice takes place on December 21 at 8:49 PM (PST). For people today, the solstice probably has a lot less significance than for people born in ancient times. A couple of weeks after the solstice, it becomes very apparent the days are lengthening, bringing hope and anticipation of the Sun once again bringing its warmth and new life. I imagine the winter solstice was the original celebration and that it eventually morphed into the Christmas of modern times: Christ Mass, the celebration of light and new life.

If you were to take a look at ancient societies, you'd find they put great emphasis on the solstice and equinox times, as they heralded the beginning of the seasons. Speaking of light and celebrations, this Christmas Day is also a full Moon day, with the Moon being in the sign of Cancer. The Moon rules Cancer and this combination of the Moon being in its own sign is perfect for family gatherings in which we share our love and generosity with our family members. It is also a time of giving our love and care to those in our extended family, including the folks in our community that may be experiencing less fortunate times and to all of God's children and the creatures that share life on our precious planet.

Mercury, the planet of communications, is in perfect Triangle with Jupiter, the planet of generosity, philosophy and spirituality. It means we have an opportunity to be expansive and generous for, as we know, the gift is within the act of giving, not in receiving. One day, we will be wise enough to perceive that God's love and light is manifest in all living creatures and thusly they are deserving of our greatest love and respect. There is gold in everyone and every one is golden. All life is precious. In the Golden Age, the souls lived in peace and practised non-violence in thought, word and deed. The last several days of December carry a certain tension to them; we know the holidays can often be filled with tension and for some there can be despair especially when we add alcohol and white powder drugs into the mix. The only way we can cure violence in our society is to strive to live non-violently and to give more and more love. Love is the only commodity that increases when we give it out.

Mac McLaughlin has been a practising, professional astrologer for more than four decades. His popular **Straight Stars** column ran in Vancouver's largest weekly newspaper for 11 years. Email mac@macsstars.com or call 604-731-1109.

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ARIES Mar 21 - Apr 19
Let up on the gas pedal, especially in the first half of December as there are a few hairy planetary aspects going on that can spell disaster in a heartbeat. December 5, 10, 19 and 20 are tricky days in which anything can happen and probably will. Measure twice, cut once; otherwise, good times are indicated.

TAURUS Apr 20 - May 21
The winter solstice on December 21 carries some big magic for Taurus. A series of fine planetary aspects takes place bringing serendipitous events and happy times. Christmas Day looks good. It's time to bring your loved ones together and celebrate and to give thanks for everything. Interesting news arrives on December 7, regarding family or finances.

GEMINI May 22 - Jun 20
You may feel a little leadfooted as you head into December. Gemini relates to the blue sky and rainbows and would rather skip over the tedious and boring details that life offers up at times. It is time to nurture yourself, to go slow and let the gnarly knots work themselves out – and they will.

CANCER Jun 21 - Jul 22
Christmas Day is highlighted by a full Moon in your sign. As we know, the full Moon brings the high tides and this full Moon may bring a heightened time into your life. It is time to celebrate and give thanks for all we have been given. Take some time to take care of yourself.

LEO Jul 23 - Aug 22
You get a cosmic pass in which you can wield your way throughout most of December. It is a good time to sort things out and to plan for the future. Set up a health regime and follow it. If you have any organizing to do, the time is right to set things right.

VIRGO Aug 23 - Sep 22
Lord Mercury and expansive Jupiter create a very nice triangular pattern on Christmas Day. You cannot ask for a better set of astrological circumstances. Mercury is about communications, agreements and negotiations while Jupiter rules trust and timing. Others are impressed with your warmth, love and generosity. Overall, it is a time of abundance and gratitude.

LIBRA Sep 23 - Oct 22
Energy is heightened on December 5 and 6 as the Moon, Mars and Pluto mix things up. You can mess things up if you're not careful with your reactions to highly charged situations or you can clear things up by using your Venusian wit, charm and wisdom. The Libra Moon highlights New Year's Eve.

SCORPIO Oct 23 - Nov 21
Venus smoothes the way through most of December. She brings, warmth, light and love – or, at least, the opportunity for you to assess what it is you really need in order to bring harmony and accord into your life. December 7 and 8 are special days as the Moon moves through your sign.

SAGITTARIUS Nov 22 - Dec 21
A shift takes place on December 10 and 11. Stay open and willing to roll with the changes, whatever they may be. It might just be the end of a situation you have endured for some time. It might also be the start of something new and exciting. Sometimes, letting go is difficult, but necessary.

CAPRICORN Dec 22 - Jan 19
The Sun's entrance into Capricorn on December 21 heralds your solar high of the year. A great transformative energy is on board and you must make the best of it. Jupiter and Pluto are casting great energy into your sign bestowing wealth and leadership. Figure out what you want to do and go for it.

AQUARIUS Jan 20 - Feb 19
Lord Saturn steadies the ship as he casts a fine aspect into your sign. You can set up a plan and work with it. The Sun moves through Capricorn starting December 21 and allows for some behind-the-scenes work to be accomplished. The full Moon on Christmas day will help illuminate your pathway.

PISCES Feb 20 - Mar 20
Pisces is one of the most magical signs of the zodiac and you may have a sense that magical things are happening. It is a time of spiritual transformation and re-evaluation. Lord Jupiter and co-ruler Neptune are activated strongly indicating that timing and destiny are playing their parts and now you must play yours.

Natural infrastructure

Across Canada, towns and cities face a one-two punch: aging infrastructure and the extreme weather climate change brings. Unless we do something, many of our roads, railways, transit lines, bridges, stormwater pipes and other built structures could become obsolete.

Our newly elected federal government took up the challenge with a campaign pledge to double infrastructure investments from $65 billion to nearly $125 billion over the next 10 years. Ontario has committed to spending $130 billion over the same time period and Alberta Premier Rachel Notley has also promised a hefty infrastructure stimulus package.

While these political commitments are long overdue, we shouldn't lose sight

Adding 10 trees to a block can produce health benefits equivalent to a $10,000 salary raise or being seven years younger.

of less-expensive and longer-lasting solutions to many of our infrastructure needs, like planting trees in urban areas for stormwater management and other services. But higher levels of government must also fund and participate in urban forest strategies to ensure that trees are promoted in our ever-densifying urban centres.

We often take trees and green spaces for granted, but we shouldn't. They clean and cool air, filter and regulate water, reduce energy use and protect homes and businesses during storms. Healthy street trees can lengthen the lifespan of built infrastructure like roads and sidewalks by shading them and reducing effects of weathering and they provide significant human health benefits. This summer, using data from Toronto, David Suzuki Foundation Ontario director Faisal Moola and his academic colleagues found that adding 10 trees to a block can produce health benefits equivalent to a $10,000 salary raise or being seven years younger.

Despite their enormous value to society, urban forest canopies are stressed and in decline in many parts of the country. Unfortunately, urban forest stewardship varies widely across the country. Few municipalities have the necessary financial resources to manage and protect their urban forests in the face of growing and diverse threats.

To help resolve this, provincial and federal governments need to update the definition of infrastructure to include green infrastructure such as trees, rain gardens and permeable surfaces and allow municipalities to spend money to develop and maintain these assets.

Higher levels of government must also update the standards by which municipalities report and manage their government assets to include trees, parks, wetlands, woodlots and public aquifers. That would facilitate setting minimum provincial standards for maintenance of critical green infrastructure and would improve management practices. We have provincial standards for grey infrastructure such as roads, so why not for green infrastructure? With the help of the David Suzuki Foundation, the tiny town of Gibsons, BC, has already started on this path.

If we're going to build, let's build green. Green infrastructure complements and reduces costs associated with traditional grey concrete, steel and asphalt infrastructure. It also provides a multitude of co-benefits that improve the health and well being of residents and makes our communities more beautiful and pleasant.

Excerpted from the original article. **David Suzuki** is a scientist, broadcaster, author and co-founder of the David Suzuki Foundation. Written with contributions from David Suzuki Foundation Ontario and Northern Canada Director Faisal Moola and the Green Infrastructure Ontario Coalition. Learn more at www.davidsuzuki.org. **Editor's note:** David Roberts, brother to *Common Ground's* publisher, planted many trees, including the beautiful towering tree at the northwest corner of 4th and Burrard in Vancouver.

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She graduate from Anhui College of Traditional Chinese Medicine in 1985. She has been working in the field of TCM since then. Please call to book your appointment.

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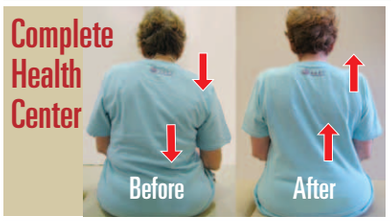

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– Marshall McLuhan

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– Gary Snyder

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GMO BITES

Approval of GM salmon eggs challenged in Canadian court

Environmental groups have challenged Environment Canada's decision to approve the production of genetically modified salmon eggs, citing the ecological dangers of such a risky action. The Ecology Action Centre and Living Oceans Society partnered together in challenging Environment Canada's decision to approve genetically modified Atlantic salmon eggs. The case was heard in Ottawa's Federal Court on November 17, 2015.

The environmental groups contend the government agency did not follow its own legislative rules and conduct a full risk assessment before allowing Massachusetts-based biotech firm, AquaBounty Technologies, to produce GM-salmon eggs on Prince Edward Island.

CTV News has reported that Mark Butler, with the Ecology Action Centre in Halifax, said there is a risk of genetically modified salmon escaping from land-based tanks and mixing with wild salmon and the consequences of that happening is really unknown to us.

"Once that fish breeds with another wild salmon, you can never put the genie back in the box," he said before leaving for the two-day hearing in Ottawa. "This technology slightly increases the growth rates of fish, so they get to market faster. Compare that benefit to the risk to wild stocks. If genetic contamination did occur, it would have a huge impact on the recreational fishery."

The Boston, Mass.-based company claims it has developed a way to make Atlantic salmon grow twice as fast as normal by modifying eggs with genes from chinook salmon and an eel-like fish called the ocean pout. That information is enough to scare most people and has already given the fish the nickname, "frankenfish."

[At press time, the US Food and Drug Administration had approved the genetically modified salmon as food.]

NPR News reported in June this year that two questions are being raised about the safety of GM salmon: "What would happen if these fish got out of the land-based facilities where they're grown and escaped into the wild? Would genetically modified salmon push out their wild counterparts or permanently alter habitat?"

The questions were tackled in a study conducted by a team of scientists led by Robert H. Devlin, a scientist at Fisheries and Oceans Canada. They reviewed over 80 studies that looked at growth, behaviour and other trait differences between genetically modified and unaltered salmon.

The scientists used this information to determine what might happen if GM salmon were to get loose in the oceans. The team found that a growth hormone gene was taken from one fish and combined with the promoter of an antifreeze gene from another fish. This combo speeds up and increases growth, making the salmon grow faster.

However, messing with the genes also affects other traits in salmon. Genetically modified salmon eat more food, spend more time at the water's surface and tend to stay by themselves, rather than congregate. The biggest finding? The GM salmon's immune functions are reduced. These findings raised another question: Would the altered traits make GM salmon less likely to survive in the wild?

We all know better than to bet on a sure thing because something can go wrong and accidents do happen. But do we want to take that chance? We will have to wait for the final decision after the hearing.

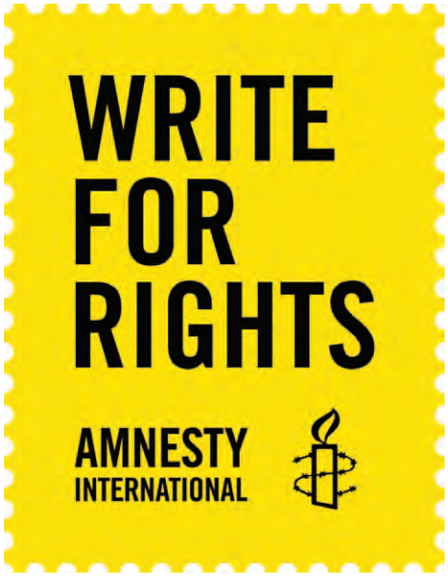
Source: Food Democracy Now, November 17, 2015.
Excerpted from the original posting by Karen Graham.
www.fooddemocracynow.org

Join Amnesty International's letter writing campaign

Human rights violations are still common in many countries

Every year around Human Rights Day on December 10, activists in more than 140 countries around the world come together to write letters calling for the protection and promotion of human rights.

Why December 10? It was on December 10th, 1948, that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was adopted at the UN by world leaders. Canadian John Humphrey was one of the principal writers of the UDHR. Most international human rights law draws from the UDHR.



Unfortunately, human rights violations, including torture, unfair trials, mass killings, enforced disappearances and unlawful eviction are still common in many countries.

Write for Rights marks International Human Rights Day by bombarding the authorities responsible for human rights abuses with letters from all over the world focused on just a few selected cases. Amnesty International has proof that your messages help convince government officials to release people imprisoned for expressing their opinion, stop the use of torture and end other human rights abuses.

10 ways your words are changing lives

As we get ready for Write for Rights 2015, our global letter-writing marathon, we look at how your words and ongoing campaigning made change happen after the 2014 campaign.

1. Freedom in Nigeria: the Governor of Delta State responded to pressure from Amnesty supporters and granted a full pardon to Moses Akatugba, who had been sentenced to death (aged 16) for stealing three phones.

2. Investigating torture in the Philippines: the Philippines police announced that letters sent by a "human rights organisation" – which we can confidently say is Amnesty International – have prompted them to investigate the shocking torture of Jerryme Corre (see photo), who was electrocuted, punched and threatened with death.

3. Changing the law in Norway: the Norwegian government said it will change the law for people who want to change their legal gender. It follows our campaigning for John Jeanette Solstad Remø, a transgender woman who was unable to change her legal gender without compulsory medical treatment.

4. Allowing prison visits in China: the daughter of Liu Ping, the activist jailed for fighting corruption in China, has finally been allowed to visit her in prison. The international attention on the case may have played a role in this positive development.

5. Fighting racism in Greece: Paraskevi Kokoni, the Roma woman beaten up in a vicious racist attack in western Greece, met with the Greek Minister of Justice to hand over letters collected during Write for Rights. The Minister said the current anti-racist legislation is "insufficient" and proposed measures to change it.

6. Improving healthcare in South Africa: women and girls in Mkhondo, South Africa, now have better access to pregnancy healthcare. One clinic has increased its antenatal service from two to seven days a week, dramatically reducing waiting times. Government officials have also visited the town to assess and monitor the situation, and health workers have taken up the cause, putting pressure on government to give them more resources.

7. Raising awareness in the United Arab Emirates: you fought for Mohammed Al-Roken, who was jailed for 10 years after a huge crackdown on political and human rights activists in the UAE.

8. Giving strength in Uzbekistan: the family of Erkin Musaev, who was falsely accused of spying and jailed for 20 years after unfair trials in Uzbekistan, have told us your letters are giving him "strength, optimism and faith." Erkin passes on a huge thank you to everyone who is not indifferent to his fate.

9. Supporting Chelsea Manning in the USA: together, we took more than 240,000 actions for Chelsea Manning, who was sentenced to 35 years in prison after leaking classified US government material. "I'm so thankful for having all of your support to keep me optimistic," she told us. "I'm staying strong because of you!"

10. Getting compensation in India: the Indian government said it will revise the number of deaths and injuries for which it is seeking compensation following the 1984 toxic gas leak in Bhopal. This could be a huge step towards ensuring the companies involved pay for the true scale of the disaster.

> Write for Rights marks International Human Rights Day by bombarding the authorities responsible for human rights abuses with letters from all over the world focused on just a few selected cases.

Source: Amnesty International Canada, amnesty.ca.

For 33 years, *Common Ground* has supported peace and social justice.

Jerryme Corre looks through some of the letters sent to him as part of Write for Rights 2014. Photo credit: Amnesty International

Your letters make a difference!

On or near December 10, we invite you to get involved by either writing letters from your home or hosting a public letter writing event. Either way, let Amnesty know you're participating by registering your event at www.writeathon.ca On the site, you will also find case descriptions, tips on letter writing and information about public events taking place near you.

Gratitude
live longer
be happier

by Dr. Mercola

photo © Starryvoyage

While it's certainly good to have an annual holiday to remind us to express gratitude, there's much to be said for the benefits of cultivating the spirit of thankfulness year-round.

People who are thankful for what they have are better able to cope with stress, have more positive emotions and are better able to reach their goals. Scientists have even noted that gratitude is associated with improved health.

As noted in a previous article on this topic published in the *Harvard Mental Health Letter*, "expressing thanks may be one of the simplest ways to feel better… The word gratitude is derived from the Latin word *gratia*, which means grace, graciousness or gratefulness (depending on the context). In some ways, gratitude encompasses all of these meanings. Gratitude is a thankful appreciation for what an individual receives, whether tangible or intangible.

> People who are thankful for what they have are better able to cope with stress, have more positive emotions and are better able to reach their goals.

With gratitude, people acknowledge the goodness in their lives. In the process, people usually recognize that the source of that goodness lies at least partially outside themselves. As a result, gratitude also helps people connect to something larger than themselves as individuals – whether to other people, nature or a higher power.

People feel and express gratitude in multiple ways. They can apply it to the past (retrieving positive memories and being thankful for elements of childhood or past blessings), the present (not taking good fortune for granted as it comes) and the future (maintaining a hopeful and optimistic attitude). Regardless of the inherent or current level of someone's gratitude, it's a quality that individuals can successfully cultivate further."

Gratitude – it does a body good

Dr. P. Murali Doraiswamy, head of biologic psychology at Duke University Medical Center, once stated, "If [thankfulness] were a drug, it would be the world's best-selling product with a health maintenance indication for every major organ system."

One way to harness the positive power of gratitude is to keep a gratitude journal or list where you actively write down exactly what you're grateful for each day. In one study, people who kept a gratitude journal reported exercising more and they had fewer visits to the doctor compared to those who focused on sources of aggravation.

As noted in a previous ABC News article, studies have shown that gratitude can produce a number of measurable effects on a number of systems in your body, including:

- Mood neurotransmitters (serotonin and norepinephrine)
- Inflammatory and immune systems (cytokines)
- Reproductive hormones (testosterone)
- Stress hormones (cortisol)
- Social bonding hormones (oxytocin)
- Blood pressure and cardiac and EEG rhythms
- Cognitive and pleasure related neurotransmitters (dopamine)
- Blood sugar

Ways to cultivate gratitude

Cultivating a sense of gratitude will help you refocus your attention toward what's good and right in your life, rather than dwelling on the negatives and all the things you may feel are lacking. And, like a muscle, this mental state can be strengthened with practice. Besides keeping a daily gratitude journal, other ways to cultivate a sense of gratitude include:

Write thank you notes: Whether in response to a gift or kind act or simply as a show of gratitude for someone in your life, getting into the habit of writing thank-you letters can help you express gratitude in addition to simply feeling it inside.

Count your blessings: Once a week, reflect on events for which you are grateful and write them down. As you do, feel the sensations of happiness and thankfulness you felt at the time it happened, going over it again in your mind.

Pray: Expressing thanks during your prayers is another way to cultivate gratitude.

Mindfulness meditation: Practising "mindfulness" means you're actively paying attention to the moment you're in right now. A mantra is sometimes used to help maintain focus, but you can also focus on something that you're grateful for, such as a pleasant smell, a cool breeze or a lovely memory.

…Previous research has shown that employees whose managers say "thank you" feel greater motivation at work and work harder than peers who do not hear those "magic words." As noted in a previous blog post in Mark's Daily Apple, ...Research has shown that being on the receiving end of a person's gratitude can boost subjects' sense of self-worth and/or self-efficacy. It also appears to encourage participants to further help the person who offered the gratitude but also another, unrelated person, in an unconscious 'pay it forward' kind of connection."

Cultivating an attitude of gratitude as part of a healthy lifestyle

Starting each day by thinking of all the things you have to be thankful for is one way to put your mind on the right track. Also, remember that your future depends largely on the thoughts you think *today*. So each moment of every day is an opportunity to turn your thinking around, thereby helping or hindering your ability to think and feel more positively in the very next moment…

Most experts agree there are no shortcuts to happiness. Even generally happy people do not experience joy 24 hours a day. But a happy person can have a bad day and still find pleasure in the small things in life.

Be thankful for what you have. When life gives you 100 reasons to cry, remember the 1,000 reasons you have to smile. Face your past without regret; prepare for the future without fear; focus on what's good *right now*, in the present moment and practise gratitude. Remember to say "thank you" – to yourself, the Universe and others. It's wonderful to see a person smile and even more wonderful knowing that you are the reason behind it!

© Dr. Mercola. For more research information, visit www.mercola.com Excerpted from the original article at mercola.com

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DEC 6 & 19
Krishnamurti Vancouver Group @ Vancouver Public Library, Board Breakout Room, 350 W. Georgia St. 1-5PM. Free video showing & dialogue! www.meetup.com/Krishnamurti-Vancouver-Group

DEC 9
Fracking up our Coast: free town hall meeting with Guy Dauncey, Adam Olsen, Laurel Collins. 7:30PM, Shawnigan Lake Community Centre, #3-1760 Shawnigan Mill Bay Road (outside of Victoria). Speakers will discuss the overall need to divest from fossil fuel projects, specific concerns regarding this project, and alternatives for the future.

DEC 10
Human Rights Day: Write a letter; change a life! Sign up for Amnesty International's Write for Rights at writeathon.ca However you participate, add your voice to the growing movement for justice and human rights.

DEC 11-13
Introduction to Foot Reflexology commences Certificate Weekend Training Course. Introduction 7:30PM $10; Course $395 + GST. Pacific Institute of Reflexology (604) 875-8818 www.pacificreflexology.com

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Introduction to Ear Reflexology commences Certificate Weekend Training Course. Friday Introduction 7:30PM, $10; Course $395 + GST. Pacific Institute of Reflexology 604-875-8818, www.pacificreflexology.com

DEC 21
Goddesses Never Age - Shamanic Workshop Celebrating Crone Wisdom & Energy – receive the messages. 7-9:30pm, in Vancouver. By donation. Call Maggie: 604-805-1884.

JAN 6
From Crisis to Celebration: 7 Steps to a Real Relationship. With Duane and Catherine O'Kane, 7:30PM sharp. Unity of Vancouver, 5840 Oak @41st. www.clearmind.com Bring display ad this page for free entry.

FEB 12-14
The Wellness Show: Helping You Find Balance – Exhibits, seminars, cooking, demos, prizes & more. Vancouver Convention Centre, East Building, Exhibit hall B&C. Event info: www.thewellnessshow.com or 604-983-2794.

THURSDAYS
Free Info Sessions at the International College of Traditional Chinese Medicine, Thursdays 2-4PM, Dec 10 & 17, 201-1508 W. Broadway, 604-731-2926. www.tcmcollege.com

ONGOING

Original World hosts handcrafted journeys to traditional cultures: Spirit of Myanmar Feb 5-16 & Sept 28-Oct 9. Bhutan Festivals Mar 23-Apr 4 & Sept 6-18. Treasures of Tibet Apr 4-16 & Sept 18-30. Soul of Sri Lanka Feb 10-23 & Nov 10-23. Info: www.originalworld.com (888) 367-6147 Email: inquire@originalworld.com

Ways to Make a Difference This Christmas

Covenant House Christmas Backpack Program: Covenant House needs donations of new clothes & toiletries for its annual backpack program for young people aged 16 to 24. The organization needs lots of men's and women's socks this year, as well as shaving cream, hoodies, umbrellas and hand warmers. www.covenanthousebc.org

Greater Vancouver Food Bank Christmas Campaign: Change lives this Christmas! There are families in your community who are worried about food this winter. Make a gift to the Food Bank this Christmas & bring healthy food and a warm heart to help families enjoy the holidays this year. www.foodbank.bc.ca

Downtown Eastside Women's Centre provides support to over 300 women, children and seniors every day, providing clothing, hot meals, computer access and toiletries in Vancouver's poorest neighbourhood. www.dewc.ca

Family Services of Greater Vancouver Christmas Hamper Fund: Every year, FSGV collects donations for food and clothing for families and young people who have difficulty meeting their basic needs at Christmastime. www.fsgv.ca

Give a Second Chance campaign: Donate to BCSPCA, the British Columbia Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals: www.spca.bc.ca

Homeless Partners Christmas Wish List: City coordinators with Homeless Partners interview homeless people in their communities, learn their stories and record two wish list items for the Christmas season. Their stories are posted on the website & donors choose which items they'd like to buy for the less fortunate. www.homelesspartners.com

Make a Wish Foundation Season of Wishes of BC and the Yukon spends most of the year making wishes come true for kids suffering from life-threatening illnesses. www.seasonofwishes.weebly.com

The Salvation Army: Giving Hope Today – Fill the kettle and make a difference in someone's life. Everyone is worthy of compassion and respect. www.salvationarmy.ca

Vancouver Harbour Light operates four shelter facilities that provide 176 emergency shelter beds nightly and offers a safe place of refuge and support, trust and hope. www.harbourlightbc.com

Walk Free: Help survivors of slavery rebuild their lives. Walk Free's partner HAART Kenya is a key organization working exclusively on human trafficking issues and with survivors in Kenya. Donate at walkfree.org

BC Children's Hospital Foundation Toy Drive: this program works to ensure every patient and their siblings have presents on Christmas morning. Donate at www.bcchf.ca

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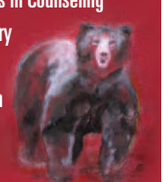
Patricia Vickers has a Masters in Counseling Psychology, an Interdisciplinary Doctorate and is a graduate of the Pacific Jubilee Program for Spiritual Direction.



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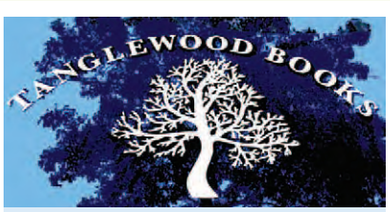

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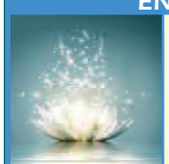
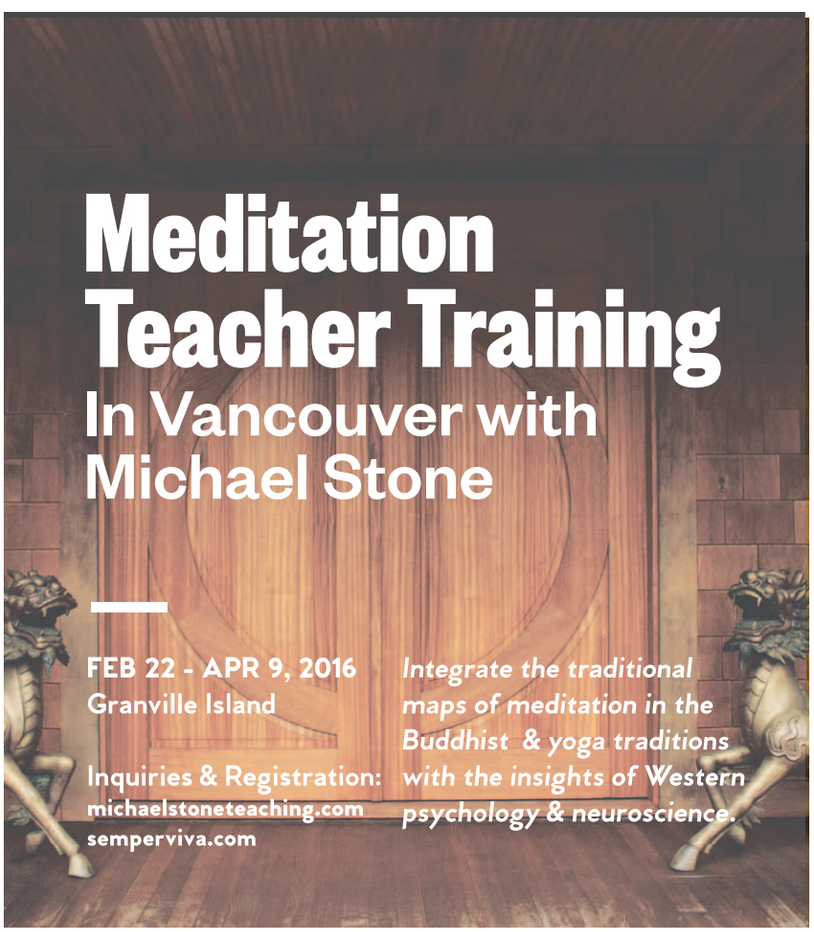


Transformation thru Meditation
Intro to the theory and practice of JYOTI MEDITATION
Meditation on the Inner Light
Sunday DEC. 13 ~ 2 PM

Science of Spirituality
Meditation & Ecology Centre
11011 Shell Rd, Richmond, BC
www.sos.org
To register call Linda
604-985-5840
Drop-ins are welcome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nicolette@communityfarmstore.ca

www.communityfarmstore.ca

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From Crisis to Celebration:
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Duane and Catherine O'Kane

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